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ABSTRACT

The inservice program described in this paper was a developmental process that focused on formulating solutions to problems identified by the needs assessment and coordination of staff development activities. The premise upon which this model was based was a recognition of the need for teachers to be actively involved in inservice activities that offer planned experiences, activities, and studies that will increase their knowledge and improve their skills. The program involved 45 elementary teachers and 2 administrators from 2 Pennsylvania schools who participated in developing criteria to assess buildings, administration, curriculum, staff, and support services. Over the 2.5-year duration of the project, faculty involvement and the degree of staff development were assessed. The program was conducted in four phases: (1) a self evaluation by the faculty and administration of the schools; (2) an evaluation of the schools' programs and processes conducted by a visiting committee; (3) the school's consideration of the findings of the evaluations; and (4) a follow-up questionnaire study with tabulation and analysis of the data. A discussion is presented of the findings of the needs assessment and the factors that either prohibited or propelled the changes that had been recommended by the program participants. (JD)

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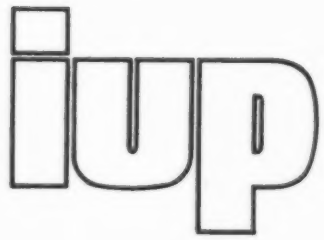

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SCHOOL EVALUATION AS A CHANGE AGENT

MODEL FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Presentation

at

National Council of States on Inservice Education

Annual Conference

Denver, Colorado
November 22-26, 1985

The research project was conducted over a two and one-half year period by the professional staff at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and ARIN Intermediate Unit #28.

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ABSTRACT:

Forty-five elementary school teachers from two rural western Pennsylvania schools were involved in developing criteria to evaluate an entire elementary program in two schools. Criteria was developed for the assessment of buildings, administration, curriculum staff and support services.

"Many teachers have negative feelings toward inservice meetings due to non-productive and poorly planned programs they have attended." (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1975.)

In light of these 'negative feelings', many teachers view inservice programs as boring, inapplicable, poorly-focused and irrelevant. Unfortunately, there are many dissatisfied educators who are seeking opportunities for professional growth, and too many inservice programs fall short of providing the incentives to do so. In fact, one author cited several flaws inherent in traditional inservice proams: teachers often view inservice consultants as outsiders who are unfamiliar or unsympathetic to their needs; many presentations are not applicable; little provision is made for involvement of teachers in ongoing, self-improvement programs; outside 'experts' seldomly have long-term contact with the district when the inservice program is over and, too often, the inservicing does not provide for professional improvement (Sportsman, 1981).

Moreover, Goodlad claimed that inservice attempts fail due to short-term (one-shot) programs and their focus on general topics that are too broad or comprehensive.

Other options do exist for educational development and/or redevelopment, but they may not fulfill individual needs. University courses, exchange programs, professional presentations and lecture series may not provide the particular skills that bolster the improvement of instruction. Yet, it is important for teachers to be exposed to current instructional methods and strategies in order to "....meet the instructional challenges of aneverchanging educational system". (Farnsworth, 1981).

The most effective determinants of this professional training are still unclear, but Medley (1973) and McCormick (1979) suggest that a systematic approach to on-site in-servicing can be a positive component in effecting improved instruction. In line with this idea, in a recent survey of school personnel at a Utah elementary school, 'workshops at school' was found to be the highest priority item in a list of possible in-service methods (Farnsworth, 1981). Similarly, several recent writers (Lytle, 1978; Jenkins, 1977, McPherson, 1981) concur that in-servicing is a necessary, ongoing feature of professional life, and it must be improved to provide meaningful and stimulating training.

Moreover, Hutson (1979) suggested guidelines for effective in-service programs. Those who receive training should be involved with the planning for such in-service. Incentives for in-service participation should be intrinsic. The school campus should be the focal point for in-service training activities, and in-service should be based on a developmental rather than deficit program.

There are several indications that reforms are taking place in the area of in-service education. Many school districts are currently implementing strategies to develop effective in-service training programs, and on a state level, in-service guidelines have been developed to redesign and improve in-service programs. One model, in particular, was devised in 1975 by the Bureau of Curriculum Services, Pennsylvania Department of Education. The guidelines specified that in-service education should be "...planned experiences, activities and studies to increase professional educators' knowledge and improve their skills" (page 1). The need for teachers to be actively involved, to gain practical information, to perform practical learning tasks and attend well-organized, valuable and appropriate in-service programs was the premise for the development of these guidelines. Effective planning, implementing and evaluating of said programs should facilitate the needs, resources, interests and competencies of the involved educators.

Under the auspices of these guidelines, an inservice program was designed for use in two western Pennsylvnia schools. The forty-five elementary teachers and two administrators participated in developing criteria to assess buildings, administration, curriculum, staff and support services. The researchers examined faculty involvement and assessed the degree of staff development occurring over the two and one-half year duration of the project. The structural and personal steps taken to overcome resistance to faculty involvement/participation from both an adminstrative and faculty perspective were also examined.

OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of this study was to identify structural and personal impediments to effective staff development and change. It also proposed to find ways of successfully avoiding obstacles to goal attainment. The project was developed in five stages by establishing:

1. Psychological readiness for change

   To determine psychological readiness for change, the evaluating team met with various administrators from the Intermediate Unit level, superintendent level and building level. They also met with the classroom and special teachers. To gain an inside knowldege of the organizational structure, individual behaviors and underlying belief systems, the evaluating team spent a great deal of time interaticng with the staff. Vacca refers to this stage as "unfreezing". Process skills were employed to allay fears, create a relaxed setting, discuss problems and emphasize the overall program as one of analysis, not appraisal.

2. Self-assessment skills and procedures

   Several assessment models were utilized to develop the self-assessment instrument. Among them were the Middle State, NCATE, Pennsylvania Department of Education, and Intermediate Unit #4, 15 and 28. Various inservice meetings were held to develop the self-assessment skills and procedures.

3. Evaluative criteria for measurement

   The following evaluative criteria for measurement were examined:

   --- School and Community
   --- Philosophy and Objective
   --- School Staff and Administration

-- Faculty Data
-- Design for Learning (Curriculum and Instruction)
-- Areas for Learning
    a. Art
    b. Health and Safety
    c. Language Arts
    d. Mathematics
    e. Music
    f. Physical Education
    g. Reading
    g. Science
    i. Social Studies
-- Alternative Education Programs
-- Learning Media Services
-- Pupil services
-- School Plant and Facilities

4. External evaluation teams

   The identification of the external evaluation teams was made by school administrators, Intermediate Unit personnel and consultants. The team consisted of three classroom teachers, one special teacher, one school administrator, one higher education staff member and one Intermediate Unit administrator. Team members were trained in skills of on-site evaluation techniques two weeks prior to the actual school visit. Evaluation logistics took place one day prior to on-site evaluation.

5. Follow-up study

   The follow-up study was conducted utilizing a two-part questionnaire administered to the forty-five teachers and two administrators. The questionnaire was designed to elicit open-ended responses and comments.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

The premise of the study was based on a three-fold concern:

1. The need for curriculum evaluation at the elementary school level.

2. The need to involve professional staff in in-servicing and total school evaluation.

3. The need to design criteria for assessment of school programs.

METHOD:

The research methodology employed was that of participant-observation. The authors were active participants in all phases of the project. Interviews, minutes of meetings, notes of small group discussions and planning sessions, observations by the on-site evaluation team, and teacher questionnaires served as the sources of information for the study. The study was conducted in four phases: 1) a self evaluation carried out by the faculty and administration of the schools; 2) an evaluation of the schools' programs and processes conducted by a visiting committee; 3) the school's considerations of the findings of the evaluation; and, 4) follow-up questionnaire study with tabulation and analysis of the data.

RESULTS/DATA ANALYSIS:

Based on the the findings of the needs assessment, the evaluating team made general recommendations regarding school improvements in the areas investigated. The teachers' committees then made specific suggestions as to how these recommendations could be carried out. The forty-five teachers and two administrators were then surveyed via questionnaires to see if the recommendations were/were not carried out. Since the questionnaire was designed to elicit open-ended responses, the respondents were also asked to reply why they felt the changes were/were not made, and who should be responsibile for implementing change. The data was analyzed (the results are indicated on Table I), and some interesting patterns surfaced:

1. Many changes that occurred were effected by individuals where immediate classroom application was suggested. For example, teachers engaged in recommended activities that had direct ties to their classrooms (i.e., field trips, resource people, etc.).
2. In most cases, teachers regarded administrators as the primary change agents. The responses indicated that the majority of teachers deferred responsibility to administrators whenever a change involved group organization and/or management.

3. Interestingly, the administrators expected certain change initiatives to evolve from the teachers. The perception of one another's roles (between teachers and administrators differed significantly, and the need for delineation of roles was evident.

4. Several recommendations requiring various constitutencies to share or work together were not achieved. For instance, various committees were suggested to foster communication channels (e.g., district-wide steering committee, parent advisory committee, student committee). These committees were not formed, and possible explanations were extracted from the responses:

    a. A considerable time investment (beyond the working day) was required to achieve change.

    b. Lack of administrative support was suggested by many teachers as a possible reason for the non-implementation of these recommendations.

    c. Responsibilities for effecting change were not clearly specified.

    d. For certain activities to be implemented, scheduling problems surfaced.

    e. Lack of organizational skills (on the part of both teachers and administrators) to operationalize certain recommendations may have been another factor.

In general, six predominant factors that prohibited change were found: 1) lack of time; 2) lack of money; 3) lack of space; 4) lack of interest; 5) lack of administrative support; and, 6) differing perceptions of roles between teachers and administrators.

The factors that propelled change were found to be: 1) teacher participation and sense of involvement; 2) immediate application of change (classroom ties); 3) positive feedback from administrators, teachers, parents and students; 4) dissemination of information (exchange of ideas); 5) utilization of resources and services; 6) interpersonal relationships and cooperation; and, 7) broad-based recommendations applicable to many faculty members.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

The researchers, in retrospect, view the change agent model for staff development as a process approach that has potential to effect positive, professional involvement and growth. The inservice program was a developmental process that focused on formulating solutions to problems identified by the needs assessment and coordination of staff development activities. Goodlad refers to these conditions as dialog, decision-making, action and evaluation. As cited in Hutson's criteria for inservice programs, several factors were attributable to the success of the program. The model was a procedural approach that entailed total staff involvement in the planning, implementing and evaluating processes. The staff development processes focused on the "self-renewing capability" of the schools (Goodlad). The renewal energy evolved from the teachers themselves. The change process did not initiate as an administrative directive. In this respect, this inservice project was a meaningful, integral part of staff development, and the incentives for inservice participation were, consequently, intrinsic. Also, the school campus was the focal point for the training activities. Teachers were not pulled out of the school setting. The on-site inservicing aided in the establishment of realistic goals, relevant activities, immediate applications and an overall sense of educational community. A sense of wholeness and staff commitment were maintained throughout the project by simultaneously addressing 1) schoolwide concerns and 2) individual needs. The outcomes were mutually influential.

Furthermore, the inservice project emphasized concrete skills (rather than theories), the opportunity for teachers to try out these new skills (on the job) and to receive feedback. Mazzerella's review of inservice programs highlighted these guidelines as proponents of inservice effectiveness.

Another determinant of the program's effectiveness aligned itself with other researchers' findings. Berman and McLaughlin found, after examining the implementation of hundreds of progrms, that -- administrative support was a major factor. Throughout our inservice program, the principals participated in a supportive and cooperative role. The united with teachers to address needs, concerns and problems.

Thus, the total staff involvement bolstered positive interaction between teachers, administrators, and consultants, and a commitment to utilize the information gained for the improvement of instruction. The comprehensive project increased the "teacher's knowledge of variables over which they had some control, and they learned practical ways to apply these findings to their classrooms" (McCormick). In essence, this inservice project highlighted involvement and professional growth of staff, positive interaction between teachers and administrators, on-going improvement of the school program and, ultimately, better educational practices for students.

DATA SUMMARY: TABLE I

ACCOMPLISHED:

1. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
   - TEACHERS' ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN NEWSLETTERS

2. READING
   - PARTICIPATION IN READING CONFERENCES
   - DISSEMINATION OF READING CONFERENCE INFORMATION

3. LIBRARY
   - IN-SERVICING OF TEACHERS

4. SCIENCE
   - BUDGET ALLOCATED FOR CONSUMABLE ITEMS
   - TEACHERS' PARTICIPATION IN SPECIAL WORKSHOPS
   - FIELD TRIPS
   - RESOURCE PEOPLE UTILIZED

5. MEDIA SERVICES
   - PUBLICATION OF MEDIA CATALOG
   - TEACHERS' MEDIA NEEDS (SURVEYED AND MET)

6. HEALTH
   - FORMAL OBJECTIVES WRITTEN FOR HEALTH CURRICULUM
   - PLANNED PROGRAM FOR DRUG ABUSE

NOT ACCOMPLISHED:

1. SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY
   - PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
   - TEXTBOOK COMMITTEE
   - DISTRICT-WIDE STEERING COMMITTEE
   - STUDENT COMMITTEE

3. MATH
   - REMEDIAL MATH PROGRAM
   - ENRICHMENT PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS IN COMPUTER EDUCATION
   - MATH FIELD TRIPS
   - MATH RESOURCE ROOM
   - STUDENT MATH CLUB

4. MUSIC
   - FULL-TIME MUSIC EDUCATION

5. READING
   - ACTIVITY PERIOD

6. LIBRARY SCIENCE
   - REVIEW AND ORDERING COMMITTEE
   - UTILIZATION OF CAFETERIA FOR SCIENCE PURPOSES

7. PUPIL SERVICES
   - JOB DESCRIPTIONS FORMALIZED FOR:
     1. SCHOOL NURSE
     2. GUIDANCE COUNSELOR
     3. SUPERVISOR OF CHILD ACCOUNTING
   - REFERRAL FORM FOR COUNSELING

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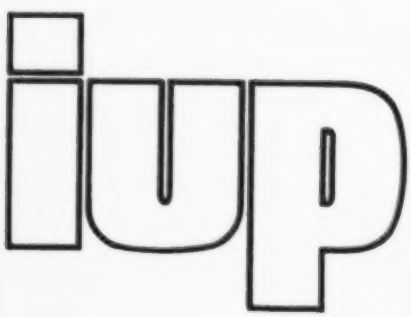

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